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August 27, 2020

Secretary Wilbur Ross
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Director Steven Dillingham
U.S. Census Bureau
4600 Silver Hill Road
Washington, DC 20233

Dear Secretary Ross and Director Dillingham,

I write today to demand that you reconsider your recommendation to end all Census field data collection operations a month earlier than previously scheduled¹. With 4 in every 10 households remaining to be counted² and amidst a historic public health crisis, the Census Bureau needs to allocate more time for in-person outreach, not less.

A complete and accurate Census is the basis for our democracy. It ensures the equitable distribution of over \$675 billion in federal funding each year³ as well as giving each American, regardless of background, fair representation in their government. Before this year's Census even began, hard-to-count communities, such as the rural and minority communities I represent, faced real challenges for accurately reporting data, which requires a substantial field operation⁴.

My district is also experiencing historic wildfires that are damaging homes, property and threatening the safety of my constituents. These factors coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic justify an extension of the Census field count time. Even after eight months of outreach, my district has a response rate of just 68 percent⁵. That is unacceptable.

Your decision to end the field count an entire month early will lead to the undercounting of many Central Valley families, robbing them of their equal voice in government. By your assistant director's own projections, your agency will be unable to produce a complete count

¹ *Census Bureau*, [Statement from Census Bureau Director Dillingham](#), August 3, 2020

² *NPR*, [The 2020 Census Could Be The Least Accurate Ever — And It's Ending A Month Early](#), August 14, 2020

³ *Census Bureau*, [Uses of Census Bureau Data in Federal Funds Distribution](#), Marissa Hotchkiss and Jessica Phelan, September 2017

⁴ *Census Bureau*, [Counting the Hard to Count in a Census](#), July 2019

⁵ *Census Bureau*, [Response Rates](#), August 24, 2020

within the current deadlines⁶. Now is not the time to exacerbate that problem by reducing the time needed to achieve a reliable census count. It is vital that the Census Bureau commits to ensuring an accurate count by providing additional time.

Given the circumstances of this year, an inaccurate count that will shortchange many Americans is already underway, unless you act. Extending the field count operations for an additional month will give the Census Bureau adequate time to complete a full, fair, and accurate 2020 Census. Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Josh Harder". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "J" and "H" are large and prominent, with the rest of the name following in a more connected script.

Josh Harder
United States Representative (CA-10)

⁶ **Census Bureau**, [2020 Census Operational Press Briefing](#). July 8, 2020